



ROMANS

THE CLEAR EST GOSPEL OF ALL
A FREE PARAPHRASE BY E.H. (JACK) SEQUEIRA

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PREFACE

No book in the whole of the Bible explains so clearly and so masterfully the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as Paul's epistle to the Romans. Here, the great apostle expounds fully the whole counsel of God pertaining to our salvation in Christ. Paul's purpose in writing this somewhat lengthy letter to the Christians in Rome was to reveal to them the full significance of the everlasting gospel so that they may be fully established in their Christian faith. It is for this reason Luther labeled this epistle as "the clearest gospel of all."

Further, no book in the whole Bible has made such an impact on the Christian Church in bringing spiritual revival and reformation as the epistle to the Romans. It was through being enlightened as to the truth of justification by faith, so clearly expounded in Romans, that Martin Luther was delivered from his bondage to legalism and became the leader of the Protestant Reformation. The same doctrine, expounded by Luther, led to the conversion of John Bunyan, the "Immortal Tinker of Bedford." Similarly, it was as he listened to a man reading from the preface of Luther's Commentary on Romans that John Wesley's heart was "strangely warmed" on the evening of May 24, 1738, resulting in the great English revival of the 18th century. Many other experiences could be added to the above.

Not only is the need for revival and reformation in the Christian Church today so desperate, but never in the history of God's people has it been more important for believers to be fully established *in Christ* than in our present day, "the time of the end." Had Paul been living in these last days of this earth's history he certainly would have had as great a concern for the believers as he had for the Roman Christians who in his day faced great persecution. However, while the substance of his gospel would have been the same, the style of his letter to 20th century Christians would have been different. The Christians of his day belonged to a very different culture, background, and mentality than their modern counterparts. This is one reason why so many today find Romans such a difficult book to understand.

The purpose of this somewhat free paraphrase of Paul's epistle to the Romans is to bridge that gap between the world of Paul's day and ours, so that the message of Romans may become mean-

ingful to the modern Christian. This in turn, I hope, will bring revival and reformation in the lives of all those who are hungering and thirsting after the righteousness of Christ. Jesus made it clear that before the end comes “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness” (*Matt. 24:14*).

The fulfillment of this prophecy is referred to in the book of Revelation as the three angels’ messages—the Everlasting Gospel, proclaimed in the setting of God’s final judgment (*Rev. 14:6-12*). It is my firm conviction that this epistle to the Romans, along with its sister epistle to the Galatians, will never be separated from the proclamation of the threefold message of Revelation 14 in their world-wide work and influence. How important then, that we come to grips with the message of Romans!

Every attempt has been made to be as accurate as possible to Paul’s thought expressed in each text. However, I do not claim infallibility, and the best I can hope for is that you let this stimulate you to a deeper, prayerful study of Romans. Keep close to several good Bible translations or, if you know it, the Greek. My sincere prayer in presenting Paul’s letter to the Romans in today’s terms is that “you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (*John 8:32*).

E. H. (Jack) Sequeira

CHAPTER ONE

Prologue

To my dear fellow Christians in Rome:

1 My name is Paul, and I consider myself a slave of Jesus Christ who chose me to be an apostle and especially set me aside to proclaim God's good news of salvation. **2** This good news was promised by God long ago through His prophets who recorded it in the Holy Bible, what we now call the Old Testament. **3** It has to do with the gift of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who in order to save us, assumed our corporate fallen humanity that needed redeeming and actually came as a descendant of David; but in character and performance demonstrated, in spirit, love, and holiness, that He was the Son of God. **4** God proved this by resurrecting Him from the dead, something He could not legally do had Christ, even by a thought, sinned.

5 It is through Christ that all humanity has been reconciled to God and I have been commissioned, as an apostle, to proclaim this good news to all the Gentile world, urging them to accept this salvation by faith, through obedience to the truth as it is in Christ, **6** just as you in Rome have done and now belong to Jesus Christ. **7** This letter is addressed to all of you beloved Christians in Rome, you who are now God's special people and are called saints by Him. May this letter find you enjoying the peace that comes from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Admiration and Concern for the Roman Christians

8 I would like, first and foremost, to thank God in the name of Jesus Christ for your tremendous witness which is being talked about throughout the Roman Empire! How your faith in Christ is unshaken, in spite of fierce persecution! **9** I want you also to know that I constantly mention you in my prayers; this is the honest truth, and God, whom I serve in proclaiming the good news of His Son, is my witness. **10** Besides this, my sincere plea with God is that at last it may be His will that I should come personally to you **11** to share with you some of the wonderful spiritual truths revealed to me, so that it may further strengthen your faith. **12** In

other words, I want us to mutually encourage each other's faith, you mine and I yours.

13 Furthermore, I want you to know, brethren, that I had planned several times to visit you in Rome so that I could join you in your evangelistic outreach and win some souls for Christ, as I have done elsewhere. But unfortunately pressure of work has always come in the way (*Rom. 15:20-22*). **14** You see, I am obligated to all classes of men, educated or uneducated, rich or poor, to proclaim this wonderful gospel. **15** Therefore, as far as it is within my ability, I am most anxious to preach this good news about Christ to all who are in Rome. **16** For even though many ridicule this gospel, there is nothing more I glory in than this good news of salvation *in Christ*; for it is God's very power to save everyone who will appreciate and receive this gift which was first offered to the Jews and now is to be proclaimed to the rest of mankind.

17 It is through this gospel alone, God's righteousness *in Christ*, that God is able to give mankind a right standing with Himself; our part from start to finish is to receive it by faith, motivated by a deeper and deeper heartfelt appreciation of what it cost God to save us in His Son. This is how Habakkuk in the Old Testament put it: "Only he who is righteous through faith shall have everlasting life."

Universal Sinfulness of Mankind

18 As you know, God's displeasure or wrath is clearly revealed from heaven against all who think they can live without Him, enjoy sin, and deliberately suppress the truth. **19** It is sad that even though their conscience convinces them that God does exist and that He is deeply concerned about their welfare, they do not want to acknowledge Him. **20** Ever since God created this wonderful world of ours, which clearly demonstrates His existence and creative power, mankind in his sinful state does not want to submit to His rulership, even though it is for his own benefit. Clearly then, anyone who rejects God is inexcusable since this rejection is not out of ignorance but deliberate.

21 The sinful heart is so desperately wicked that instead of acknowledging God as God, men are ungrateful and unwilling to glorify or appreciate Him; instead, in their foolishness they prefer senseless speculations and the result is that their ungrateful hearts

become engulfed in darkness. **22** In this condition, while they claim to be smart, they are in actual fact behaving foolishly **23** by substituting for the true eternal God their own creation resembling mortal man, birds, mammals, reptiles, or their humanistic ideas of salvation, such as Marxism, etc.

God-Abandonment Increases Sin

24 So God has abandoned them to their own choices, to indulge in perverted sex and the evil clamors of their sinful nature, thus demonstrating the degrading results of permissiveness. **25** This is the condition you see today; men have so twisted the truth that they would rather worship themselves and their ideas than the God of heaven, who sustains them and from whom all blessings flow.

26 Since they do not want God to be part of their lives; this is why He has given them up, to indulge in their degrading passions: **27** women preferring to be lesbians and men gay, each consumed by their perverted lusts for each other, practicing all kinds of shameful vice and as a result are suffering the inevitable consequences of their improper conduct.* **28** And because they insist on pushing God away, He who is *agape* love does not impose Himself on them but leaves them to their own devices. **29** The result is an increase in all sorts of crime and shameful behavior such as: malice, greed, envy, murder, quarreling, deceit, etc.

30 Men and women have become traitors, open slanderers, God-haters, insolent, proud, boastful, designers of new forms of evil, disrespectful to parents, **31** conscienceless, treacherous and void of love or pity. **32** All this in spite of the fact that they know it will result in divine retribution, the sentence of eternal death; yet they not only practice these terrible things but even encourage others to do them.

*The present scourge of sexually transmitted diseases is a painful warning that our present world is heading in the same direction as the Roman world was in Paul's day.

CHAPTER TWO

God's Judgment Is Impartial

1 Incidentally, those of you who are self-righteous (Jews implied) and are quick to pass judgment on others, may I point out that you are really condemning yourselves; for in reality you who pose as judges are equally guilty of these very sins. **2** As you know, only God is rightly qualified to pass judgment on those who are indulging in the sins I have described. **3** While you who act as judges of those who practice such sins and yet secretly continue doing the same yourselves, do you for a moment think that you are going to escape the judgment of God?

4 Don't you realize it is only because of a loving God who is rich in kindness, tolerance, and patience, that you are still alive? And should not this cause you to turn in humility to Him with deep heartfelt repentance? **5** Instead, your stubborn refusal to admit that you yourselves are sinners and therefore in need of God's saving grace will one day be your downfall, when you face the reality of your own condemnation in the day of judgment. **6** For when God finally judges the world, He will pay everyone exactly what they justly deserve.

7 Those who in sincerity have patiently been engaged in good works and put God first will receive eternal life, **8** while those who have rejected God's grace and insist on being self-dependent, continually and persistently resisting the pleadings of the Holy Spirit, will reap the consequences of their actions when God abandons them to their own destruction. **9** And this applies to everybody, irrespective of whether you are a Jew or a Gentile, for God does not play favorites. **10** In the same way, glory, honor, and peace will be bestowed upon everyone who pursues doing good, beginning with the Jews and ending with the Gentiles. **11** For again, there is no partiality with God.

12 We shall all be judged according to the light we have received; those who have sinned without the knowledge of the law will be judged according to the convictions of their consciences, while those who have sinned with the knowledge of the law will be held accountable to the law. **13** And the fact that you have the knowledge of the law does not of itself make you righ-

teous, since the law demands perfect obedience to all its commandments before one can be declared righteous (*Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:10*). **14** Indeed, the heathen who have never heard the law but are obeying their consciences in the right way will be declared righteous, since their consciences will act as the law to them. **15** They show by their deeds that they are obeying the law written in their hearts; their consciences will either vindicate or condemn them, depending on how they responded to their innermost convictions **16** because every secret thought, motive and conviction will be brought to the open on judgment day when God will judge the world through Jesus Christ, according to the gospel I preach.

Hypocrisy of Judaism Exposed

17 Now you who call yourselves Jews and rely on your knowledge of the law and boast you are the only ones who know God, **18** claiming to understand His will, and capable of determining what is right and what is wrong from your knowledge of the law, **19** you think you only are qualified to guide the blind, the only true light to those that are groping in darkness, **20** a genuine tutor of the foolish and a teacher of the youth, seeing you only have the correct knowledge of truth as spelled out in the book of the law!

21 You who claim all these privileges and boast to be the only ones who can explain the truth, do you not teach yourselves too? You who preach that men should not steal, are you not guilty of stealing, yourselves? **22** You who warn men to cease committing adultery, are you not practicing it yourselves? You who outwardly abhor idolatry, are you not fleecing their temples? **23** You are constantly boasting about the law, but in reality are you not dishonoring God by breaking it? **24** For, as the Bible clearly indicates, the name of God is being slandered among the heathen because of your hypocrisy. **25** Now you may claim to be God's people because you have been circumcised, but if you are not fulfilling the whole law your circumcision is valueless and therefore you are no different than the heathen who are uncircumcised (*Jas. 2:10*).

26 In fact, don't you see that an uncircumcised heathen who is living a good life to the best of his knowledge will be considered a child of God? **27** And will not this heathen, who has never been circumcised, but yet is observing the law written in his heart, con-

demn you who are circumcised and have an explicit knowledge of the law but in practice are hypocrites? **28** You see, the real Jew in God's eyes is not the one who happens to have Jewish blood running through his veins, and true circumcision is not an outward physical thing; **29** but the true Jew in God's eyes is the person who from the heart truly appreciates Him, and genuine circumcision is a spiritual matter, the removal of unbelief, and not just an outward act. Such a person is full of praise and adoration for what God has done and has no confidence in himself (*Phil. 3:3*).

CHAPTER THREE

Advantage of the Jews

1 Does this mean that there is no advantage in being a Jew? Or that circumcision has no significance whatsoever? **2** Not at all; this is not what I am trying to say. The Jews certainly have been a privileged people and have had tremendous advantages; foremost of all they have had a clear knowledge of God and His law through the written Word which was given to them. **3** Unfortunately, some of them misused these privileges and therefore have twisted the truth of God. But does this in any way nullify God's truth? **4** Certainly not. God is always true and right; the problem is man's unfaithfulness to the truth. As the Scriptures say: "When you, dear God, speak, you are always right and the verdict will certainly be in your favor when you come to trial" (Ps. 51:4).

5 Now since our unfaithfulness brings to light or proves that God is right, how shall we respond? —that it is unfair (to use typical human reasoning) for God to punish us, seeing our wrongdoing helped to vindicate Him? **6** No way! Can't you see that if His dealings with us Jews is in any way unfair, how can He ever judge the whole world in truth? **7** Again, as some argue, "If God's truthfulness is made clearly evident when contrasted with my falsehood why should I still stand condemned, seeing I am really doing God a favor?" **8** With such reasoning we might as well teach, "Why not do evil so that God's righteousness may stand out"; this in fact is what some false reporters have accused me of teaching. All I can say is that these false reporters will certainly receive their just punishment.

All Humanity Is Dominated by Sin

9 What is our conclusion then? Can we say that we Jews are in any way better than the Gentiles, seeing we have been privileged to have greater light than they? Certainly not! As we have clearly seen, both we Jews as well as the Gentiles are together totally dominated by the power of sin. **10** As the Old Testament clearly states: "There is not one person who is truly righteous, **11** neither is there any who really understands what true holiness is, nor is there anyone who seeks God without a selfish motive (*Phil. 2:21*);

12 Every one is dominated by greed so that they are all corrupt; therefore no one is capable of doing good, not even one individual. **13** Even their words stink and their tongues are always lashing out at each other, just like a poisonous snake that strikes out. **14** Their mouths are always cursing and swearing, **15** while their feet are quick to move to take revenge. **16** Every one of them is heading for disaster, **17** because they do not know how to live in peace with each other. **18** But worst of all they have no true appreciation for God.

19 With this awful but true evaluation of fallen mankind, we realize that we could never meet the holy demands of God's law which we are under. Therefore all mankind, without exception, stands guilty and condemned before God. **20** This is our terrible situation; no human being has the slightest chance of saving himself or standing righteous before God by attempting to keep His law; all that the law can do is prove to us that we are sinners and slaves to the power of sin (*Rom. 7:14*).

The Gospel Introduced

21 But now God's wonderful way of salvation has been brought to light; God has given sinful mankind a right standing with Himself and it is entirely His own doing, without any help whatsoever from us, not even our law-obedience has contributed one bit. This salvation is what God promised all along in the writings of Moses and the prophets. **22** But now it is a historical reality realized in Jesus Christ and His righteousness, which righteousness is made effective through faith alone. This applies to both Jews and Gentiles alike since there is no distinction, **23** seeing all have sinned corporately in Adam (implied, see *Rom. 5:12*), and are indi-

CHAPTER FOUR

Righteousness by Faith Is Apart From Good Works

1 To prove that this is how God saves all mankind, (especially to you Jews), let us consider the situation of our forefather Abraham, who is the prototype of the saved. **2** If Abraham was declared righteous or justified on the basis of his good works, he would certainly have bragged about it; however, his boasting would obviously be in his achievements and not in God's free gift of salvation. **3** But what are the facts? Scripture tells us that "Abraham put his full confidence in God's promise of salvation and not in his own performance and God in turn credited Abraham's faith with righteousness" (*Gen. 15:6*).

4 When a workman, for example, collects his pay he does not consider it as a gift or a favor from his boss, but as wages that he rightfully earned and deserves. **5** On the other hand, a person who fails to produce any righteousness but gratefully accepts by faith God's free gift of salvation, prepared *in Christ* for sinners, that person's faith is credited with Christ's righteousness.

6 This is exactly how David, too, describes the good news of salvation aside from any good works we may have done, **7** for he declared in his Psalms "Happy is the person whose willful disobedience (*transgression*) has been forgiven, and whose failures (*sins*) God has covered up; **8** Happy is the one whose very sinfulness (*iniquity*) the Lord does not take into account and holds nothing against him" (*Ps. 32:1,2*).

Righteousness by Faith Is Apart From Circumcision

9 Does this happy news of righteousness by faith apply only to the circumcised Jews, or are the uncircumcised Gentiles included too, seeing we are discussing Abraham's situation, whom the Jews claim as their father? **10** The answer to this question can be determined by another question, and that is, When did God acknowledge Abraham's faith and credit him with righteousness, before or after he was circumcised? The facts are that Abraham received the gift of righteousness that comes through faith long before he was circumcised; to be precise it was about 25 years before God required him to be circumcised.

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vidually coming short continually of God's ideal of living a life of selfless love.

24 But the good news is that anybody and everybody may now experience a right standing with God by accepting with heartfelt appreciation God's free gift of salvation which He obtained for us undeserving sinners through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Christ Jesus. **25** For God, in His grace and unfailing love for us, offered up His beloved Son as an atonement for our sins so that through faith *in Christ* and Him crucified we may be truly forgiven and reconciled to Him; God offered up His Son as our sin bearer to satisfy the justice of the law so that now He has a legal right to forgive us of our sins (*Heb. 9:22*). You see, before the cross event, God could only forgive sins through His kindness.

26 But now, because all mankind was included in Christ's death (*2 Cor. 5:14*), God is perfectly just in declaring us sinners righteous, that is, all who by faith have accepted this union with Christ Jesus. **27** What does this do to our human bragging? There is absolutely no room for it. On what grounds? On the grounds that our works have made no contribution whatsoever towards our salvation, but we receive it by faith as an entirely free gift from God. **28** For the fact of the matter is that a person is justified through faith alone and none of our law-keeping contributes to that right standing with God. **29** Does God save the Jews this way? Or does it apply only to the Gentiles? No, it applies to both Jews and Gentiles alike. **30** You see, God has only one way of saving all mankind, whether we be Jews or Gentiles or whether we have lived in the Old Testament period or are living in these New Testament times; that way was by including all mankind in the holy history of His Son, Jesus Christ. Our part from beginning to end is to respond by faith motivated by love. (*Gal. 5:6*). **31** Does this mean that the truth of righteousness or justification by faith does away with or bypasses the law? Not at all! God's way of saving us *in Christ* fully meets all the law's requirements on our behalf—both its positive demands as well as its justice, for in Christ's holy history the law was fully satisfied (*Rom. 10:4*).

11 Then why, you will inquire, did God introduce circumcision, seeing Abraham was already declared fully righteous without being circumcised? It was not added as an extra requirement for salvation but rather to seal or confirm the righteousness he already had by faith. You see, circumcision, which symbolizes the removal of unbelief (*Deut. 10:16*), was introduced because Abraham unfortunately sidetracked from the way of faith in trying to fulfill God's promise of a son through his own efforts, when he produced Ishmael (*Gen. 12 and 15-17*). So then we may say that since Abraham was justified by faith while still being uncircumcised he is the father or prototype of all the Gentiles who like him believe, even though they have not been circumcised. **12** And since circumcision confirmed Abraham's righteousness which he received by faith he also becomes the father or prototype of the circumcised Jews, as long as they, like Abraham, believe in God's promise of salvation in Christ apart from being circumcised. Thus we may conclude that Abraham's situation proves that God's way of saving all mankind is through faith alone.

Righteousness by Faith Is Apart From Law Obedience

13 Now I know you Jews will not fully agree with this conclusion and will insist on bringing in the law. May I remind you that the promise made by God to Abraham and his descendants, that he should inherit the earth made new, was not on the condition that he observe the law but on the basis of righteousness that comes through faith (*Gal. 3:1 7, 18*). **14** For if those only who keep the law qualify to inherit the new earth, then no longer can faith be the means by which we receive salvation, and the promise of God becomes meaningless. You cannot have it both ways; for righteousness through the law and righteousness by faith are mutually exclusive so that the two can never be mixed.

15 But the truth is, salvation can never be gained through law-keeping since the law demands perfect obedience and none of us can claim that; in fact all of us have sinned and therefore deserve the just punishment of the law. Don't you realize that the purpose of the law was never to save but to convince us that we stand condemned as sinners, thus making the promise of salvation all the more desirable? **16** God, in His great love and mercy, promised us undeserving sinners salvation entirely as a free gift and all He is

asking from us is to accept it by faith with deep heartfelt appreciation. In view of this, everybody, Jews and Gentiles, is guaranteed salvation, as long as they live by faith as did Abraham, whom God referred to as our father.

Abraham's Faith Is Our Example

17 For God declared to Abraham in His Word: "I have made you the father of many nations" (*Gen. 17:5*). God calls him our father in the sense that He has set him to be our example or the prototype of all who will follow in his footsteps and believe in God's promise—He who is able to bring to life those that are dead or create things without depending on pre-existing matter. **18** Consider for a moment Abraham's faith: he believed God could give him a son even when medical science said it was impossible; and that is why he qualified to be the father of many nations, because the promise was: "that is how your numberless descendants will be saved—by faith" (*Gen. 15:5,6*).

19 Abraham's faith in God's promise became so strong that it did not weaken, even the slightest bit, at the age of about 100 years when he realized that humanly speaking it was impossible to have a child through Sarah his wife, because she had now passed the age of child bearing. **20** Yet he never doubted for one moment, through unbelief, God's promise made to him some twenty-five years before; therefore he continued to praise God and give Him glory, **21** being absolutely sure in his mind that God was able to do the impossible and keep His promise of giving him a son, even at this late stage in life. **22** This is why God was pleased with him and credited his faith with the righteousness promised to him *in Christ* (*Gal. 3:16*).

23 Now the statement recorded in Scripture, "Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness," does not apply to Abraham alone, **24** but to all of us also; for we too will be credited with righteousness if we believe in Jesus Christ whom God raised from the dead. **25** For God abandoned Christ to experience the second death on the cross in order to meet the just demands of the law for the sins of everyone and then raised Him up so that Christ may rightfully claim justification for us who believe.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Fruits of Justification by Faith

1 Having convinced you of God's way of salvation in Christ, let me now describe some of the wonderful blessings that come to those who respond positively to the gospel. The first and immediate blessing that comes to us who are justified by faith is inner peace with God. This peace is made possible through Jesus Christ, in whom we have been fully reconciled to God by His life and death.

2 Secondly, Christ also places us justified believers in a new relationship with God so that we are now standing in grace; this means that through this same faith we now have full access to the very power of God manifested in Christ's earthly life (*1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:9*). This in turn gives us hope of experiencing the glorious character of Christ, being reproduced in us now, and His glorified perfection when He comes.

3 Naturally all this involves suffering and depriving our sinful nature of its evil desires while waiting patiently for the blessed hope; but we happily put up with these things because of the ultimate hope, which is worth waiting for; **4** and this ultimate hope we patiently wait for is, of course, glorification, which will be realized at the second advent. **5** In the meantime we are not ashamed of being called Christians but instead willingly share and display the wonderful *agape* love of God which we are experiencing through the indwelling Holy Spirit. **6** This *agape* love of God is so wonderful that I would like to describe it to you: while we were utterly helpless to save ourselves God sent His Son, at the right time, to die for us ungodly rebels.

7 There is nothing in secular human history that can be compared with this *agape* love, for the ultimate display of human love is when a person is brave enough to die for a good person or maybe a good cause, and even this is something which very rarely happens. **8** But in contrast, God directed His *agape* love towards us undeserving sinners by sending His beloved Son to die the wages of sin, the equivalent of the second death, while we were still sinners. **9** But that is not all. Having brought us into a right standing with God (justified) by His supreme sacrifice, Christ ascended into

heaven and is now interceding on our behalf against the accusations of Satan, and finally He will vindicate us in the judgment.

All these superabundant blessings are the results of God's great unconditional *agape* love for us. **10** For, if while we were still God's bitter enemies, He poured this *agape* love on us and reconciled us unto Himself through the death of His Son, you can be absolutely sure that this unfailing *agape* love will continue to work on our behalf and for our ultimate salvation through Christ's priestly ministry in heaven. **11** It is for this reason we not only have assurance and peace, but we should by our life continue exulting in God's inexpressible gift, our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained our reconciliation and redemption.

The Two Adams

12 In order to fully understand and appreciate this glorious truth of salvation in Christ, let us consider our situation in Adam; for we are saved *IN CHRIST* in the same way we are lost *IN ADAM* (*I Cor. 15:21,22*). It was through Adam, the father of the human race, that sin and death became part of mankind's heritage. Let me explain. Adam's original sin resulted in his coming under condemnation and the sentence of death. This is because God made it absolutely clear to him that the day he ate of the forbidden fruit he would surely die (*Gen. 2:17*). But this death has pervaded the whole human race because all mankind, though not responsible, was involved or participated in that one sin. This is true because God created all mankind *in Adam* (*Acts 17:26*) and therefore we were all *in him* or *part of him* when he sinned (see note).*

13 Let me prove my point: Take for example the human race that lived before Moses. These people were certainly sinning; but since God had not yet given mankind His law as a legal code until the time of Moses, He certainly would not be a just and fair God if He would condemn them to death for their sins. **14** Yet the facts are that these people who lived from the time of Adam to Moses were dying. Was God punishing them unjustly, seeing their sins were not open violations of His law as was Adam's one transgression? The answer is *No*; but the truth is that they were dying because *in Adam* we all participated in his willful sin and therefore must die, apart from our own personal sins. That is why Adam is, in a sense, a type of Christ who was to come to save all humanity. For just as

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what Adam did affected all mankind, so in the same way what Christ did affected all mankind except in the opposite sense.

15 This is because what Adam and Christ did were absolutely opposite. Unlike Adam's sin which brought about universal death, Christ obeyed all of God's requirements and brought in the free gift of eternal life to all mankind (*Heb.9:12*). God accomplished this out of pure grace in a most remarkable way: He united our corporate fallen humanity that needed redeeming to His Son's divinity in the incarnation so that we actually participated or were implicated in Christ's obedience and holy history (*I Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:3*); this is how Christ, as the second Adam, saved all mankind and set us free. **16** Further, I would like to add that God accomplished much more *in Christ* than simply cancelling Adam's one sin that brought the death sentence on all mankind. For in Christ's sacrificial death not only was Adam's sin cancelled, but on the cross all our own personal sins, past, present, and future were cancelled too so that in Him we have been justified from all sins.

17 And this is not all; while Adam's sin placed all mankind under the reign of death so that none can escape the "grim reaper," the wonderful truth of God's grace is that all who by faith receive the gift of life *in Christ* will not only be raised to eternal life, but much more, they will reign with Christ throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity (*Rom. 8:17; Rev. 20:6; 22:5*). I am sure you will agree with me that this is superabundant grace. **18** This then is the sum of what I have been trying to get across: by Adam's one sin the whole human race was judged condemned and received the sentence of eternal death. This means that legally none of us really have the right to live and therefore are as good as dead (*Eph. 2:3*). In the same way, Christ's perfect obedience has acquitted all mankind so that *in Him* we stand legally justified and are qualified to live forever. This is the good news of the gospel.

19 Besides this, Adam's one sin also made us captives to sin (*Rom. 7:14*) so that all of us are born with a sinful nature that, in and of itself, is incapable of obeying God's holy and righteous law (*Rom. 7:14-25*). Likewise, Christ's obedience has also redeemed us from the corruption of our sinful natures so that when He comes to take us to heaven He will replace our sinful bodies with sinless

bodies, similar to His when He rose from the dead. This is part of our glorious inheritance *in Christ* (*Rom. 8:23; Phil. 3:20,21*).

20 And how does the law fit into all this? God introduced the law to show or convince us of the awful result of Adam's one sin; it produced a whole human race of sinners dominated by the power of sin. But just as Adam's one sin multiplied through his posterity, the good news of the gospel is that God's saving grace has multiplied all the more. For *in Christ* not only has God redeemed all mankind from sin, Adam's plus ours, but through Him we can be more than conquerors (*Rom. 8:37*). **21** Therefore, just as sin rules over every child of Adam from birth to death; so we believers must now allow grace to rule over us until Jesus Christ ushers in eternity at His second advent.

**Explanatory Note on Romans 5:12*

Paul discusses mankind's situation *in Adam* in verses 12-14 in order to show Adam is a type or pattern of Christ (verse 14 last part). The reason the death that resulted from Adam's one sin passed on to all humanity is not because God transfers Adam's guilt to us but because all sinned *in Adam* (not *like Adam*). At least four reasons may be given to show that this is Paul's idea in verse 12:

1. Paul's use of the aorist tense implies a once-for-all act in the past.
2. In verses 13 and 14 the people who lived from Adam to Moses were dying even though their sins were not like Adam's transgression.
3. In verses 15-18 Paul declares four times that we are judged, condemned, and die because we are *in Adam's* sin and *not* because of our sin.
4. If all die because all have sinned *like Adam*; for this analogy to fit Christ, we would have to teach that all live because all obeyed *like Christ*. Not only is this the very opposite of Paul's thought, but we would be guilty of teaching legalism.

The whole force of the parallel in *Rom. 5:12-21* between *Adam* and *Christ* depends on the idea of the solidarity of mankind *in Adam* and *in Christ*. In the great majority of the 5 to 10 times the word *Adam* is used in the Old Testament it possesses a collective significance. In the same sense Christ is referred to as the *last* or *second* Adam in the New Testament. According to the N.T. scholar

Brooke Foss Westcott: "If Christ took our nature upon Him, as we believe, by an act of love, it was not that of one but of all. He was not one man only among many men, but in Him all humanity was gathered up. And thus now, as at all time, mankind are, so to speak, organically united with Him. His acts are in a true sense our acts, so far as we realize the union. His death is our death, His resurrection our resurrection. (*The Gospel of the Resurrection*, p. 39.)

CHAPTER SIX

Justification by Faith Means Being Dead to Sin And Alive to God

1 Now how are we to relate to this wonderful truth of being saved by grace? Can we say that since Christ's redeeming grace has cancelled Adam's sin plus all our own personal sins, we are now at liberty to enjoy sin, seeing grace has set us free from all condemnation (*Rom. 8:1*). **2** No, never! How can we ever think like that when we know that Christ's death to sin included all mankind (*2 Cor. 5:14*) and we believers have by faith identified ourselves with that death? (*Gal. 2:20*) **3** Or are you not aware of the meaning of baptism, that it is a public confession declaring our union by faith to Christ and Him crucified? **4** This means His death to sin becomes our death to sin; His burial becomes our burial—symbolized by our immersion in the waters of baptism; and just as God raised Christ up from the dead by His undefeatable power we too must allow that same power, now dwelling in us through the Holy Spirit, to control us in our new Christian life (*Rom. 8:11*).

5 For since we have by faith identified ourselves with Christ, sharing in His death to sin, surely we must also identify ourselves by faith with His resurrected humanity, cleansed of sin. **6** And knowing this—that our self-centered, sinful life was crucified with Christ, thus bringing to an end the source of our sin problem—by faith we can now experience deliverance and no longer be slaves to sin (*Gal. 2:20*).

7 For when a sinner dies, such a person has not only met the justice of the law (justified), but has also been set free from the dominion of sin. **8** And if we have died with Christ, our sin bearer, we believe with certainty that we shall also live with Him in eterni-

ty, **9** for we know that Christ died only once and was raised from the dead never to die again; death can no longer have sway over Him. **10** This is because when Christ died on the cross He died the death the law demands of every sinner, the equivalent of the second death, and now that He lives He does so in unbroken union with His Father our God; never will He ever have to face God-abandonment as He did on the cross.

11 In the same way, you too, who are united to Christ by faith, must regard yourselves as having died to sin and ended with that relationship, and must now live in unbroken union with God. **12** Accordingly, do not let the pull of sin rule over you so that you have to yield to its demands. **13** Neither must you allow the clamors of sin to control the various parts of your body to satisfy its own sinful ambitions; but by faith put yourselves at the disposal of God's Holy Spirit and let Him use your bodies as tools for doing good and righteous acts.

Justification by Faith Means Being Slaves of God

14 For remember, sin no longer has authority over you who are *in Christ*; it has no right to dominate you nor can it destroy you eternally, because you are no longer legally under the law, in the sense of the old covenant, from whence sin gets its power to kill sinners (*I Cor. 15:56*); but you are now under grace, the new covenant of God, which does not destroy but saves to the uttermost (*Heb. 7:25*). **15** Does this mean we can take advantage of this truth? What I am alluding to is this: since sin can no longer destroy us Christians, because we are no longer under the jurisdiction of the law but under God's saving grace, can we say "it really does not matter if we keep on sinning"? The answer is a definite *No!*

16 You know well enough that in the slave society, when one places himself at the disposal of a master as a slave, he has to obey his master in all that he requires. This is how it is in the spiritual realm too; when you chose to serve sin it became your master and it will rule you until it takes you to your grave. On the other hand, if you have decided to obey the gospel, then you have chosen God to be your master and you have to obey Him, who is the author of righteousness and not sin. **17** All of you believers can thank God because you were all born slaves to sin as a result of the fall (*Rom. 7:14*); now, from the depths of your hearts, you have obeyed the

gospel you were taught; **18** and being emancipated from the dominion of sin, you have, out of your own free will, chosen to be slaves of our benevolent God, the source of all righteousness.

19 I am using this illustration of slavery because you understand how your sinful natures are slaves to sin; but now what I am admonishing you is that just as you formerly yielded the various parts of your bodies to impure acts and to ever-increasing lawlessness, so also, now that you have been set free from sin by the grace of God, you must yield the various parts of your bodies to right-doing, making Christ's holy character your goal in life (*Phil. 3:12-14*). **20** Remember . . . when you were slaves to sin all that you were capable of was to commit sins, for even your good deeds were polluted with selfishness. What profit was that to you, now that you have seen the light? **21** None whatsoever; not only are you ashamed of your past history but had you continued that lifestyle it would have ended in eternal death.

22 But now that you have been emancipated from the dominion of sin and become slaves of God by your own choice, the blessings you receive are twofold; it is holy living in this life and the joys of eternal life with God at Christ's second advent. **23** For just as the wages paid by sin is eternal death, so likewise the gracious gift of God is eternal life through our faith-union with Jesus Christ our Lord.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Liberated From Under the Law's Jurisdiction

1 In the last chapter, I indicated that we Christians are no longer legally under the law (*Rom. 6:14*). I would like to amplify on this, as I am sure some of you will object to that statement. Don't you realize, brethren, that when Christ liberated us from the dominion of sin He also delivered us from the jurisdiction of the law? May I remind you who are familiar with the law, (Jews implied) that the law has authority over a person only as long as that person is alive.

2 Take for example the situation of a married woman: according to the law of marriage, a woman is bound to her husband by the marriage vow as long as they both live. But should her hus-

band die, she is immediately released from her marriage vow and is permitted to marry another man. **3** If, however, the woman leaves her husband, without Biblical grounds, while he is still alive and marries another man, she certainly will be considered as an adulteress. But this is not true if her husband dies and she later marries another man, since the marriage vow is valid only as long as “both shall live.”

4 This is precisely how Christ liberated us from under the law’s jurisdiction. All of us were bound to the law from birth, just as a wife is to her husband by marriage. This means the law had authority over us as long as we lived. But when we died in the corporate humanity of Christ, which, incidentally, we Christians have identified with by faith and baptism, we were released from the jurisdiction of the law; and this God did in order that we might be married or united to the risen Christ. The result is that now we can actually bear spiritual fruit unto God, because this is what Christ is able to do in us, something the law was incapable of doing.

5 But prior to this glorious event, while our sinful self was still ruled by the law there was absolutely no compatibility between the law and our sinful natures so that all that we did was in complete contradiction to the law’s requirements, which in turn meant we stood constantly under the condemnation of the law to eternal death. **6** But now that our sinful self is crucified with Christ and we have been released legally from under the law and are married to the risen Christ, we can serve God in a truly spiritual way, out of hearts full of love, gratitude, and joy instead of the old motivation of fear, which we did under the law.

God’s Law Is Holy but We Are Sinful

7 Now does the fact that Christ has liberated us from sin as well as from the jurisdiction of the law mean that the law and sin are synonymous? No, never! In fact, the very opposite is true. It is through the law that we know the true and deeper meaning of sin; for sin is the violation of the law (*1 John 3:4*). For example, I would never have known that it was a sin to covet or desire somebody else’s goods or wife if the law had not declared “thou shall not covet.”

8 But sin, being what it is, anti-law (*Rom. 8:7*), produced in me all kinds of covetous desires, thereby bringing to the open the

fact that I am a miserable slave to sin and incapable of meeting the law's demands, something I may have not fully discovered had God not given us His law. **9** In fact, there was a time when I had not fully understood the full implications of the law and consequently considered myself a righteous person worthy of eternal life (*Phil. 3:6*). But when God opened my eyes and I realized the full and deeper meaning of the law's demands, I discovered to my horror that I was a wretched sinner deserving nothing but eternal death. **10** I found that the commandments, which according to my upbringing were taught to me as the way of salvation, turned out to be the very opposite, the way of death.

11 It was really my sinful heart that utterly deceived me (*Jer. 17:9*) and gave me the idea that I could save myself through keeping the law. On the contrary, I have discovered that all that the law can do is convince me I am a sinner and condemn me to eternal death. **12** This is because the law is holy and its demands to qualify for life are absolute holiness, goodness, and righteousness.

13 But how can a holy law that is absolutely good be the means of my death? No! I did not say that; it is not the law that is the cause of death but sin that is the sting of death. But because the law condemns sin it gives sin the legal right to execute the sinner (*I Cor. 15:56*). However, the reason why God gave us His law was not to destroy us but to open our eyes to our utterly sinful state, something essential if we are to accept His gift of salvation in Christ.

Man's Sinful Nature Is Incompatible With God's Holy Law

14 So then, we may conclude that the law itself is holy and spiritual, but it is I that am sinful, sold as a slave to sin. **15** My own experience and that of every person that lives under the old covenant proves this beyond a shadow of a doubt. For even when I would like to live a good and righteous life, I discover that in practice I am doing evil—that which I hate to do. **16** And since I am doing what I really do not want to do then I am admitting that the law's demands, which I want to do, are good.

17 The real problem, then, is not my desire to do good but my sinful nature which controls me and will not submit to my good intentions prompted by the law. **18** By this I know that in me, that is in my sinful nature, nothing good resides; for while the inner-

most desires of my mind want to do good, I am incapable of carrying out those desires. **19** Instead, the evil which I detest, but what my sinful nature wants, is what I find myself continually doing.

20 Consequently, since my evil acts are really not my true intents, this is proof that I am a slave to my sinful nature which I was born with and which is the real culprit. **21** So then, this is what I have discovered to be my predicament: when I want to do good, my sinful nature dominates me and drives me to do the very opposite. **22** For deep down in my heart I really delight in the righteous requirements of the law of God; **23** but in reality and practice there seems to be another principle dwelling in my lower nature, the law of self, that continually contradicts my good intentions, making me a prisoner to sin's power which has permeated my whole physical being.

24 Oh, what a miserable and wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from the plight of my sinful body by which I am doomed to death? **25** I thank God for the way of escape He has made for us *in Christ*. So then, in and of myself, apart from the power of God's Holy Spirit, I am totally incapable of producing genuine righteousness, for while my mind may wish to obey God's holy law, my sinful nature simply will not comply and therefore enslaves me to sin. This is the predicament of fallen humanity and our only hope therefore is *Christ's righteousness*, both imputed and imparted.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Christ's Righteousness Is Imparted by the Spirit

1 Therefore, the good news of the gospel is not salvation through self-righteousness but through faith *in Christ*. Hence, there is no condemnation resting upon us who have accepted by faith our union with Christ Jesus in spite of the fact that we still possess sinful natures. **2** This is because the principle or power of sin and death dwelling in our sinful natures was defeated and dealt the death blow by the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the humanity of Christ Jesus; thus *in Him* we were set free.

3 For while God's law was incapable of saving us from sin and death, seeing our sinful natures made it impossible for the law to

produce righteousness in us, God, *in Christ*, did it; He did it by uniting the divine nature of His Son, at the incarnation, to our corporate sinful human nature that needed redeeming and in that humanity Christ assumed, which was identical to ours, the principle or power of sin was both defeated and executed. **4** In this way God not only saved all humanity but also proved that the righteous requirements of the law may be fulfilled in us born-again Christians if we, like Christ, learn to walk in the power of the Spirit and not depend on our own sinful nature.

5 For those who allow themselves to be controlled by their own sinful nature find that their thoughts are continually dominated by the sinful desires of the flesh; while those who walk in the power of God's Spirit find that their minds are dwelling on spiritual things. **6** And let me make this clear; to allow your minds to be dominated by your sinful nature is asking for trouble, for it means you are allowing yourselves to head down the road that leads to death. But, on the other hand, to allow your minds to be controlled by the Spirit is what true Christian living is all about and this brings inner joy and ultimate salvation.

7 Besides, you must realize that the sinful nature with all its desires belongs to the realm of Satan and therefore is in complete opposition to God. In fact, our sinful nature will never truly obey God's law and cannot, even if it tries, because it is enslaved to the principle of self which contradicts God's agape love (*1 Cor. 13:5*); that which fulfills the law (*Rom. 13:10*). **8** Consequently, those who allow their sinful nature to control them cannot really please God. **9** But you dear Christians, I trust, are not living that way, but are being controlled by God's Spirit who dwells in you through the new birth experience. And incidentally, if there be any among you who has not experienced this new birth, I am afraid you are not truly converted and therefore do not really belong to Christ.

10 But if Christ's Spirit dwells in you, please remember that your sinful bodies must still die, but spiritually you are alive because you have by faith surrendered your sinful self to His cross in exchange for Christ's righteous life (*Gal. 2:20*); this in turn has brought about the renewal of the Spirit which must now become the source of your Christian living. **11** For if God's Holy Spirit was able to defeat sin and death in Christ's humanity and proved it by raising Him from the dead, you can be absolutely sure this same

Spirit, now dwelling in you, is able to conquer the power of sin that dominates your sinful bodies and reproduce in you the character of Christ.

Christian Duty Is to Walk in the Spirit

12 So, dear brothers and sisters *in Christ*, we have a negative obligation as Christians and that is *not* to live according to the dictates of our sinful nature; we have by faith surrendered it to death on Christ's cross and therefore it has no claims on us. **13** However, should any deliberately or willfully live according to the yearnings of his sinful nature, this indicates such a one is unconverted and consequently is still under the sentence of condemnation and death. On the other hand, if through the power of the indwelling Spirit you are denying the clamors of your sinful nature, this is clear evidence that you are converted and stand justified in Christ and your blessed hope is eternal life.

14 Because all who, by a faith-obedience to the gospel, (i.e. surrender of the will to the truth *in Christ*) are allowing the Holy Spirit to control their thoughts and actions, show that they are truly the children of God. **15** For when you accepted Christ as your personal Saviour, you were liberated from the fear of eternal death (the wages of sin, *Rom. 6:23*) that has all unbelievers in its grip (*Heb. 2:14, 15*) and you became a child of God, having received the Spirit of sonship, so that now you can actually address God as "dear Father." **16** Further, the Holy Spirit Himself convinces you, through the truth of the gospel, that you are a child of God fully reconciled to Him *in Christ*.

Our Future Glory

17 Do you realize what this means? If we are God's children, then naturally we will one day inherit all that belongs to God; for we have become co-heirs with Christ our Lord. What a tremendous privilege this is going to be, provided, of course, we are willing to suffer for the time being, as Christ did when He lived in this wicked world. **18** But personally, I am convinced that all the suffering we have to endure in this present sinful world is nothing compared with the splendor and glory that is in store for us *in Christ* which we will receive at the second advent.

19 In fact, all of creation is waiting patiently for this deliver-

ance when it will be liberated from the curse that sin has brought to it. **20** For since the fall, this whole world came under the curse of sin (*Gen. 3:17-19*), not because of its own choice but because Adam, who was given dominion over all creation (*Gen. 1:28*) sinned, and his sin affected all of nature so that death and decay began to reign over all creation and will do so until Christ brings deliverance. **21** And so we may say all of nature is anxiously waiting for the blessed hope when death will be done away with and all of God's creation set free from the curse.

22 For I am sure you all are aware that all of nature has been groaning in agony, even as it is at the present time, waiting for deliverance just as a woman does when she is giving birth to a child. **23** But it is not only nature that is groaning; we too, who have been given the blessed hope through the experience of regeneration, are yearning and groaning within ourselves, waiting eagerly for the day when our very bodies will be redeemed from sin and its curse. **24** For while we have been saved, or justified, our present salvation is only in hope guaranteed *in Christ*. Obviously, had we already experienced the full reality of salvation we would not be waiting for it. **25** But since we are presently saved only by hope, then naturally we anxiously and patiently wait for the full reality of salvation.

God's Spirit Constantly Helps Us

26 In the meanwhile, the Holy Spirit who gives us endurance also helps us in our weaknesses and makes our prayers meaningful. For we often find ourselves unable to express our needs in prayer but the Spirit intercedes on our behalf through our groanings and yearnings which cannot be expressed in words. **27** And God Himself, who is able to read our very thoughts, understands our needs that are expressed by the Spirit, who intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

28 What's more, we know that everything that happens to us, good or bad, is used of God to work together His purpose in our lives, as we in turn put our confidence in His agape love, knowing that He cares for us. **29** For in God's foreknowledge (those whom He knew beforehand would accept His salvation gift *in Christ*), He predetermined that we Christians would one day be transformed to the very likeness of His glorified Son who is the

prototype of the saved and in whom He has obtained salvation full and complete. **30** That is why, according to His plan of salvation formulated before this world was even created, God's purpose was not only to extend the invitation of salvation and to declare the believers justified or righteous, but also to ultimately glorify them as He did Christ.

God's Agape Love Is the Rock of Our Salvation

31. What, then, shall we say in response to these wonderful facts? Since God is on our side, should it really matter if any one is against us? **32** Seeing that for our sakes, God refused to spare His own beloved Son the full wages of sin on the cross, the equivalent of the second death, don't you think He will freely and willingly give us everything else promised through His Son?

33 In view of these facts, who will dare to accuse us believers? Yes, Satan may (*Rev. 12:10*), but certainly not God, seeing He has justified us *in Christ*. **34** Who will condemn us? definitely not Christ, for He died to deliver us from our condemnation and now, since His resurrection and ascension, He has been sitting at the right hand of God to defend and vindicate our justification.

35 Can anything then really separate us from God's infinite *agape* love, revealed in Christ's holy history? When we face trials of all kinds or hardships or persecution or danger or hunger or nakedness or even the sentence of death, does this mean God has forsaken us or no longer loves or cares about us? Certainly not! **36** As it is clearly stated in the Old Testament: "Because a Great Controversy exists between God and Satan, and we believers are presently living in Satan's territory, we constantly face danger and death; we are considered just like sheep who have been herded into the slaughter house" (*Ps. 44:22*).

37 And yet, in spite of all these experiences, overwhelming victory is ours through faith in Him whose love for us never fails (*Jer. 31:3*). **38** For I am absolutely convinced that there is nothing in this whole wide universe of ours, whether it be death or life, Satan or supernatural powers, this present world or the world that shall be, the forces of this universe or that of height or depth, **39** absolutely nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from God's *agape* love towards us which was manifested in the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER NINE

Paul's Deep Concern for His Fellow Jews

1 Having expounded the glorious truths of the gospel to you Christians at Rome, I would like to share with you my deep concern for my fellow Jews. Realizing the negative reports you have been hearing about me, how I have turned against God's Law, the temple and my own Jewish people (*Acts 21:28*), I would like you to get the facts straight. Contrary to these false reports, I am telling you the absolute truth; as a Christian whose conscience is controlled by the Holy Spirit, I am not lying.

2 Deep down in my heart I am full of grief and greatly burdened about the eternal destiny of my own Jewish nation. **3** Believe me, I am willing to be actually cut off from Christ and be eternally lost, if this would in any way bring salvation to my people, **4** who by birth belong to Israel, the nation privileged to be called God's covenant people, who were blessed with His unique presence during the Exodus and to whom He made special covenants, giving them His law and His wonderful plan of salvation through the sanctuary service, plus many precious promises.

5 Furthermore, being descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they have been greatly blessed. Above all, it was through them that Christ, the Son of God, came in the flesh to be the Saviour of the world. May God's name be praised forever, seeing He must get the credit for all these blessings. Amen!

Who Constitutes True Israel

6 The fact that the Jewish nation no longer constitutes God's church today does not mean that God has failed to keep His promise made to Israel through the patriarchs and prophets. For the truth of the matter is that not every one who happens to be a Jew really belongs to God's true spiritual Israel. **7** Just as not all the descendants of Abraham, the Arabs for example, belong to the nation of Israel, but the promise made to Abraham was, "Only those who are in the line of Isaac, that is, born of God, are qualified to be part of Israel."

8 In other words, it is not the natural descendants of Abraham, or Isaac for that matter, who comprise God's people, but it is those who have experienced the new birth through faith in His promised

Son that constitute true Israel in God's sight. **9** For according to Scripture, this is how God fulfilled His promise of a son to Abraham: First, God waited almost twenty-five years until Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. Then when it was impossible for Abraham to produce a child through Sarah, God said to him, after He had entered into a faith-covenant with Abraham through circumcision, "About this time next year I will bless Sarah with a Son" (*Gen. 17*). Thus Isaac, the promised son, represents, or is the prototype of all who like him are born of God through faith *in Christ*. **10** But this is not all; even Isaac's wife, Rebecca, who had conceived twins, had an experience that reveals a vital truth.

11 Even before the twins, Esau and Jacob, were born, while they were still in her womb and therefore had not yet done anything good or bad, in order that it might be clearly established that it is by God's grace and calling we are saved and not our performance, **12** God said to Rebecca: "The elder (i.e. first-born) will serve the younger" (*Gen. 25:19-23*). This was in complete contradiction to Jewish tradition; but God did this to show that salvation is based on His sovereign will and not on one's natural inheritance or human lineage. **13** This all agrees with the statement of Scripture: "Jacob I have accepted, but Esau I have rejected."

God's Sovereign Will

14 Does this mean God was playing favorites or that He was being unfair to Esau? Certainly not! God is never unfair in any of His dealings. **15** Actually no one deserves salvation, but as God declared to Moses: "Who I have mercy and compassion on is my prerogative and not a human right; therefore I can bestow it on whomsoever I want." (In reality salvation was offered to both Esau and Jacob, but in God's foreknowledge He knew Esau would despise his birthright, or salvation *in Christ*, while Jacob would cherish it. Hence it was not really God who rejected Esau but vice versa and God only complied (*Heb. 12:15, 16*).

16 Therefore salvation is not ours by native right or inheritance, neither is it something we can earn either by choice or effort, but rather an unmerited favor based entirely on God's sovereign mercy and unconditional love (*Tit. 3:4, 5*). **17** And to prove His sovereignty, we read in the Old Testament what God said to Pharaoh: "I allowed you to become the most powerful ruler

in the ancient world for the express purpose of displaying my own greater power, when I delivered the Jews from Egyptian bondage. By this all mankind would realize there is none like me." **18** Therefore man is totally dependent on God's sovereign will for His eternal hope; and God has the perfect right to have mercy on whomsoever He wants or to reject whomsoever He wills.

God's Sovereign Will and Man's Free Choice

19 I know exactly how some of you intellectuals will respond to this; you will say: "If everything depends on God's sovereign will, He has to be responsible for anyone's damnation, seeing we humans have no choice in the matter"! **20** Such a remark is preposterous; how can we created beings dare to question our all-wise and all-knowing Creator? **21** For example, does not the potter have absolute sway over his clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for royal use while another for menial or common use?

22 Likewise, God's authority is absolute. However, in order to show His great displeasure against unbelief and exploitation, He revealed His mighty power against the Egyptians after having shown much patience with these proud, self-assertive people, who by their deliberate rejection of the God of heaven, clearly demonstrated they deserved destruction. **23** But at the same time God was merciful and patient with the enslaved Israelites, revealing through them His unconditional and self-emptying *agape* love, demonstrating to the world that He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants all to turn away from their sins (2 *Pet.* 3:9).

24 That, in fact, is our situation—all of us who have positively responded to His saving grace in *Christ* irrespective of whether we are Jews or Gentiles, since salvation is God's gift to all mankind and not just the Jews. **25** This is not my opinion but God Himself made it clear through the prophet Hosea when He declared: "Those who do not belong to literal Israel will one day be called 'My people.' And the Gentile nations that were not considered my covenant people will be called 'My Beloved' (*Hos.* 2:23). **26** And instead of being told: 'You do not belong,' they will be called sons and daughters of the living God" (*Hos.* 1:10).

27 As for the nation of Israel, the prophet Isaiah had this to say: "Even though Israel's population multiplies beyond human computation, like the sand by the sea, only a few of them (that is

those who believe) will be saved. **28** And, because unbelief is becoming rampant, God will step in and end human probation, executing judgment on all unbelievers" (*Isa. 10:22, 23*). **29** In fact, as Isaiah prophesied earlier: "If the Lord of eternal rest (sabbath) does not step in, even the Christian church will become like Sodom and Gomorrah, completely depleted of true believers" (*Isa. 1:9*).

Judaism and the Gospel

30 So this is the real situation concerning my people, the Jews: The Gentiles who realized they could not save themselves by their own good works have obtained righteousness, the true righteousness that saves, that comes from God and is made effective by faith alone, **31** while the Jews, who thought they could save themselves by keeping God's holy law, have failed miserably.

32 And why have they failed? Not because they have not tried, but because they refused to recognize God's way of salvation, which is by faith in Jesus Christ. Consequently, they have not only failed, but the righteousness of Christ has become an insult to their own self-righteousness. **33** God foreseeing this predicted this very thing when He declared: "Look, I place in Zion (Israel) a stumbling-block that will become an offense to the self-righteous Jews. But whosoever realizes their sinfulness and the value of this Rock (Jesus Christ) and believes in Him will not be disappointed on judgment day" (*Isa. 28:16*; and *Phil. 3:7-9*).

CHAPTER TEN

The Jews Refuse Righteousness by Faith

1 So you see, brethren, my heartfelt desire and prayer to God is to see my own Jewish people saved. **2** I know for a fact they earnestly worship and serve God, just as I did before my conversion, but unfortunately they have failed to grasp the wonderful truth of the gospel. **3** Consequently, ignoring the free gift of righteousness God offers them *in Christ*, they are desperately trying to produce their own righteousness, and as a result have rejected the perfect righteousness of God made available to them through faith in His Son.

4 This righteousness, produced in Christ's doing and dying, fully met the positive demands as well as the justice of God's holy law, so that every believer stands perfect *in Christ*. Thus Christ brought to an end our futile attempts to produce our own righteousness through legalism **5** because the righteousness man produces through his own efforts is never perfect. And Moses, through whom God gave His law, made it very clear: "Only the person who perfectly obeys God's law in every detail has a right to live" (*Lev. 18:5*; see also *Gal. 3:10*).

The Way of Righteousness by Faith

6 In complete contrast, the righteousness that comes through faith is not based on human effort, so that we have to hunt for Christ, **7** either by trying to reach up to heaven, or searching for Him in some hiding place on earth, as if He is extremely hard to find. **8** But how does the Bible put it? God is the one who takes the initiative and sends His Spirit right into our conscience, convicting us of the truth of the gospel as Christ is proclaimed (*John 16:8-11*).

9 And all that God requires from us is to submit to that conviction, confessing that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the World, and from the heart, believe that God did raise Him from the dead as evidence and proof of His perfect redemption, and we will be saved. **10** For righteousness by faith is a heart appreciation and response to God's supreme gift, Jesus Christ, and such faith openly acknowledges that man's only hope of salvation is *in Christ*. **11** For this is how Scripture puts it: "Whosoever believes wholeheartedly in God's Son is guaranteed salvation and, if this faith endures unto the end, will not stand condemned on judgment day" (*Isa. 28:16; John 5:24; Matt. 10:22*).

12 And incidentally, it makes no difference whether you are a Jew or a Gentile, since God's gift of salvation *in Christ* is for all humanity and the only way this salvation is made effective is by faith alone. **13** For God has guaranteed that everyone who will honestly believe in His Son is assured of salvation (*John 6:40*).

Faith Comes by Knowing the Gospel

14 Now it is true, nobody can turn to Christ for salvation if one does not believe in Him. And naturally, you cannot believe in Him

if you have never heard of Christ and His salvation history (the gospel). And the only way you can know about the gospel is when someone witnesses to you about Him or you read about the gospel in a book or hear the good news on radio or television. **15** That is why Christ commissioned the church to preach the good news of salvation to all mankind (*Mark 16:15*); and this is what Scripture says about those who do: "How beautiful are the feet of those who witness Christ to those who are still without hope and bring them the good news of salvation" (*Isa. 52:7*).

16 But the trouble with my Jewish people is that not all of them have submitted to the truth as it is *in Christ*. This, unfortunately, is exactly what the Old Testament prophet Isaiah complained about the Jews of his day. He said: "Lord, nobody seems to believe the truth I have proclaimed" (*Isa. 53:1*). **17** So faith may be defined as a heart response to the gospel we have heard preached, and the gospel is the truth as it is *in Christ*—His incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven.

Israel's Willful Rejection of Christ

18 Now, in case you are wondering if all the Jews have heard the gospel, may I assure you that they certainly have; for Christ has been preached in every corner of the Roman Empire so that there is not a single Jewish community that has not heard about Jesus Christ and Him crucified. **19** So, a lack of gospel knowledge is not their problem; neither can they give the excuse that they have not clearly understood the good news of salvation. The real truth of the matter is that they have deliberately and persistently rejected Christ as the Messiah. God, knowing this would happen, declared this through Moses: "I will pass the keys of the kingdom to the Gentiles (Christian Church) and make you Jews very jealous. This will provoke you to anger since you will feel left out" (*Deut. 32:21*).

20 The prophet Isaiah boldly made a similar statement: "Those who were not looking for the Messiah found Him and God recognizes them as His people even though they were not considered as God's covenant people" (*Isa. 65:1*). **21** And concerning the Jews, the same Isaiah said this: "All day long I have held out My hand to a people who obstinately refuse Me" (*Isa. 65:2*). In other words,

the only ones who must take the blame for being lost are the Jews themselves, those who have deliberately and persistently refused to accept Christ as God's promised Messiah.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A Faithful Minority of the Jews Saved

1 Does this mean that God has disowned all Jews? Of course not! Take me for example—am I not a Jew, a literal descendant of Abraham and of the tribe of Benjamin? **2** No, God has not by any means disowned all Jews. Certainly not those whom He knew beforehand would accept Christ. Do you remember how Elijah complained to God? **3** “Lord, the whole Jewish nation has forsaken You, killed Your prophets, destroyed Your altars and only I am left faithful to You; and now they are trying to kill me, too.” **4** How did God reply? “No, Elijah, there are some seven thousand men with their families of whom you are unaware, who have not yielded to pagan Baal worship.”

5 Likewise, at the present time, there are honest-in-heart Jews who have remained faithful to the truth and have accepted Christ as their personal Saviour. **6** These faithful ones (meaning, a remnant) realize their salvation is not the result of their own good deeds or obedience to law but God's unmerited favor bestowed on all mankind *in Christ*. For if we are saved by our own works it can no longer be salvation by grace.

7 What are we to conclude then, that the majority of the Jews have failed to recognize that God's promise of salvation has already been fulfilled in Christ's holy history and only a minority have realized this? This unfortunately is the truth. **8** Just as the Old Testament said about the ancient Jews: “God has allowed them to go their own way so that they are totally insensible to His ways” (*Isa. 29:10; Deut. 29:4*). So likewise, this is exactly how it is with the present Jews. **9** This is how David put it in his Psalm: “Their many material blessings have caused their own spiritual downfall and ruin. **10** They have allowed falsehood to blind them from seeing the truth and now they have become a guilt-ridden people.” (*Ps. 69:22,23*).

Unbelief of Jews Brought Salvation to Gentiles

11 The big question then, is: Does the failure of the Jews mean an utter disaster for God's plan of redemption? Of course not! On the contrary, God has turned it into a blessing for the Gentiles. Due to the fact that the Jews refuse to acknowledge that God's plan of salvation includes the Gentile world, their rejection of Christ has made it possible for the gospel to be taken to the rest of humanity. This in turn has made the Jews realize what they have missed. **12** And if their failure has resulted in such a tremendous blessing to you Gentiles, can you imagine how much greater and more wonderful it will be if this in turn would cause the Jews to turn back to God in repentance and accept His supreme gift, Jesus Christ?

13 While it is true that God has appointed me to be a missionary to the Gentile world, at the same time I want to make the most of my ministry and try and win back to God my fellow Jews, **14** hoping through jealousy, to cause some of the Jews, at least, to return back to God and be saved. **15** For if the rejection of the Jews has resulted in the salvation of the rest of mankind, what a glorious thing it would be if the same blessing was experienced by the Jewish people too. Would it not be like they were brought to life from the dead? **16** After all, if the true Israel that God established through Abraham Isaac and Jacob is still holy, surely the natural Jews who repent through faith in Christ will also be made holy, just as the good roots of a tree share their goodness to the branches.

A Word of Warning to the Gentile Believers

17 But now the unbelieving Jews, like branches of an olive tree, have been broken off, while you believing Gentiles, like shoots of the wild olive tree, have been grafted in, so that you are enjoying the life-giving sap of the native olive roots. **18** Please don't let this privilege go to your head so that in conceit you look down on the rejected Jews. Remember it is not the branches that support the roots but vice versa, the roots support the branches.

19 You Gentiles, don't ever get the idea that God rejected some of the Jews in order that He may replace them with you. **20** It wasn't quite like that. The reason why the Jews were rejected was because they refused to believe in Jesus, while you have

believed in Him. And since salvation is God's unmerited favor, this leaves no room for pride or boasting but just heartfelt appreciation.

21 Please be warned, therefore, that you do not fall into the same trap as the Jews did. After all, if God did not spare the natural branches, which the Jews represent, He certainly can do the same with the wild branches, which represent you Gentiles. **22** Never forget, that while God is love, He is also a just God. Those who fell experienced His justice against unbelief, and you who believe are enjoying the blessings of His love, which you will continue to experience as long as you humbly maintain your faith in Christ and do not abuse His kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off from the tree.

23 As for the rejected Jews, if they do not remain obstinate in their unbelief, but turn back to God in heartfelt repentance, God will, with delight, graft them back into the olive tree. **24** After all, if you Gentiles, symbolized by the wild olive branches, were grafted into the good olive tree so that you are bearing good olives, something contrary to nature, how much easier will it be for God to re-graft the natural branches back to their own tree.

God's Future Plans for Literal Israel

25 So then, in order to keep you Gentiles from becoming conceited like the Jews, let me share with you a divine secret revealed to me. It is this: the insensibility of the Jews is only temporary; for after God has given the Gentile world every opportunity to accept Christ and all that will believe join the Christian church— **26** once this has happened, God will in a special way confront the Jews with the gospel again so that all the Jews who realize that Christ is the promised Messiah and believe in Him will become Christians; and so, according to His promise, all true Israelites will be saved. This is exactly what the Old Testament predicted: "From the Jewish capital Christ will be proclaimed; God will remove ungodliness from the descendants of Jacob.

27 He will, as promised to the patriarchs, keep His covenant with the Jews by forgiving them all their backslidings and reinstate into the fold all who will repent, turn back to Him and accept Christ as their Saviour" (*Isa. 59:20, 21*). **28** At the present time the Jews are considered enemies of the gospel, which incidentally, is to your advantage, seeing you have become recipients to God's

salvation as a result. But God still has a desire to save the Jews and will do so to those who believe, since they do happen to be the blood descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. **29** Besides, God's saving activity *in Christ* is unconditional good news, and He desires none to be lost (2 Pet. 3:9).

30 So just as the ancestors of you Gentiles rejected God in the past and now you, their children, have become believers, **31** in the same way, the Jews are presently disobedient to the truth of the gospel while you are enjoying salvation; but when many of them in the future realize their folly, they will turn back to God and Christ, whom He sent to be Saviour. **32** For God has already made it plain: "All humanity, Jews and Gentiles, are slaves to sin and absolutely helpless to save themselves" (*Rom. 3:9-20*). "Man's only hope is salvation in Christ" (*Acts 4:10-12*).

33 Frankly, I stand amazed at the incomprehensible wisdom, grace and knowledge of our God. His ways are beyond us finite beings. **34** Who is able to grasp the mind of God, or who can ever give Him advice? **35** Who, tell me, has ever contributed anything to God so that He is obliged to him? **36** For God is the source of all life and the Creator of all living and non-living matter. Nothing exists that was not made by Him. Therefore He and He alone deserves all the glory, honor and praise, AMEN!

CHAPTER TWELVE

Living the Spirit-Controlled Life

1 Now that I have unburdened myself concerning my fellow Jews, I would like to return to the subject of walking in the Spirit and Christian living. In view of what I concluded in chapter eight regarding the unfailing love of God, I plead with you that you dedicate yourselves unselfishly to God's service—living lives that are pleasing to Him as Christ did.

2 Don't be influenced by worldly practices or secular humanism or give in to peer pressure, but instead constantly remind yourselves as Christians that you have died to the ways of the world and your one goal in life is to live for Christ, doing what He wants you to do. In other words, let God's Spirit re-mold you into His likeness. **3** This counsel comes from God Himself whose ser-

vant I am. He wants every believer to be humble, thinking and acting honestly in all matters, fulfilling His purpose for each one according to the gift of the Holy Spirit.

4 For just as the human body consists of different limbs and organs, each having its own particular function, yet together making up one person, **5** so we Christians, who through faith have become one with Christ, represent one spiritual body with each member having a particular function, yet together we are vitally linked to each other as one body *in Christ*.

6 Consequently, for the church to be spiritually healthy, the spiritual gifts each has received need to be put into practice. If preaching is your gift, proclaim God's message accordingly. **7** If your gift is serving others or administration, concentrate on serving others or on administration. You may be blessed with the gift of teaching, then let that be your field of labor for the church. **8** Another may have the gift of encouraging others. Put that ability into good use. Or one may be blessed with a generous heart, then give liberally to the needs of the church. Should your gift be that of leadership, exert yourself to lead. If helping others in need is your calling, then be a helper and do it cheerfully.

Characteristics of a True Christian

9 What I am saying is that the unconditional, self-emptying, *agape* love of God manifested in Christ's holy history, now flows into you through the Holy Spirit, and this must be witnessed through your Christian behavior (*John 13:34, 35*). This means we must hate and avoid evil and uphold and do good (*Tit.2:14*). **10** For example, in dealings with one another let unselfish love be manifested, and let us genuinely be considerate of others, giving no room for pride and conceit.

11 Do not be lazy or sponge on others, but work hard and diligently serve the Lord Jesus Christ. **12** Let the blessed hope keep you always joyful in the Lord and if you have to suffer in any way or put up with trials, endure these things with patience. Keep close to your Saviour through habitual prayer, for He longs to have fellowship with you.

13 Always help fellow believers who are in genuine need and practice hospitality with strangers. **14** And in harmony with Christ's teaching, pray for those who are against you and make your life

miserable (*Matt. 5:43-45*). I know this is contrary to the inclinations of our sinful nature, but we must be controlled by the Spirit, asking God to bless our enemies and not curse them. **15** Since we are one *in Christ*, learn to rejoice with believers who are rejoicing and weep with those who are weeping (*I Cor. 12:25-27*).

16 Practice no discrimination or favoritism in your dealings with one another and socialize with all in the church, not just the prominent or well-to-do believers; in other words, don't be snobbish. **17** If someone has done you wrong, do not retaliate and say, "I don't care what others say about it." Your public behavior must not, in any way, bring disgrace to God's church or His cause. **18** And, as far as possible, live peaceably with your neighbors.

19 Do not ever take revenge on anyone who has unjustly treated you, but leave the matter in God's hands, for He said: "Vengeance is mine; I the Lord, will justly repay those who have wronged you" (*Deut. 32:35*). **20** Instead, do the very opposite, just as Scripture advises: "If your enemy is starving, feed him. If he happens to be thirsty, give him a drink. By doing this, he will feel so ashamed of his behavior that he will regret the way he treated you" (*Prov. 25:21, 22*). **21** Finally, do not let all the evil you have to put up with get you down, but overcome evil with good.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Duties to the State

1 While we Christians may not be of the world, we are still living in the world, and therefore must obey the state authorities; that is, as long as their demands do not conflict with God's (*Acts 5:29*). For no authority exists except by God's permission, including the present authorities. **2** Therefore, anyone resisting the government authorities is really opposing a divine institution, and must be prepared to face the penalties.

3 Law-abiding citizens have no need to fear the police, but the law-breakers do. So if you want to avoid anxiety every time you see a police officer, make sure you obey the laws of the state and you will have a clear conscience instead. **4** After all, police officers are God's means of curbing crime and maintaining law and order in a sinful world. **5** For this reason you must obey the law officers

of the state, not simply because you want to escape punishment, but because, as a Christian, you believe it is the right thing to do.

6 Likewise, as a child of God, you must be faithful taxpayers, since all government workers are also servants of God, even though some may not realize this. They are there to fulfill a divine purpose. **7** Be diligent, therefore, in regards to paying all your taxes and give respect to those who run the country.

Duties to One Another

8 Keep out of financial debt as far as possible, but always be in debt when it comes to loving another; for when you love another unselfishly, you are truly keeping the law. **9** For the last six commandments of the moral law, which deal with relationships with one another, such as “You must not commit adultery,” “You must not murder,” “You must not steal,” “You must not entertain an evil desire,” etc., can be summed up positively in this one command: “Love your neighbor unconditionally, just as you naturally love yourself unconditionally.” **10** True, unselfish, *agape* love never thinks of, or does wrong to another and as our Lord pointed out, such love is the true fulfilling of the law (*Matt. 22:35-40*).

Witnessing the Spirit-Filled Life

11 These things I am counseling you to do must be put into practice all the more as you see the end approaching so that you will be found faithful and not asleep when Christ comes, which is much nearer than you think. **12** The night is nearly over and the day, which represents the second advent, is about to dawn. Let us therefore put away everything that contradicts the Christian lifestyle and let us live like true converted Christians. **13** Let the world see the transforming power of the gospel in you so that your behavior is totally different from that of the worldly people who spend much of their time in drinking, indulging in immoral sex, fighting and jealousy. **14** What I am saying is, let Christ through His Spirit completely dominate your life so that you leave no room to gratify the sinful desires of your fallen nature.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Christian Relationships

1 When a fellow believer is overscrupulous and therefore weak in faith, please do not question his or her conversion. But accept that person as a Christian. **2** For we all come from different backgrounds (such as Jewish or Gentile), and therefore, do not think alike when it comes to the Christian walk. For example, one believer may feel it is all right to eat anything while another, whose beliefs are somewhat less-informed, will eat only vegetables. **3** The Christian who feels he can eat anything must not look down on the one who doesn't feel that way. Likewise, the one who won't eat certain things must not condemn the believer who does. After all, both believers are equally accepted in God's sight.

Judging One Another

4 When it comes to non-fundamentals, no Christian has the right to pass judgment on the views of another Christian, just as one person cannot pass judgment on another man's servant. After all, each servant is answerable to his own boss and it is the master who decides what is acceptable or unacceptable behavior from his servant. As Christians, Christ is our Lord and Master and each believer is accountable to Him. **5** For instance, a Christian of Jewish background may be particular about observing the feast days of the Old Testament while another, being a Gentile, makes no distinction between feast days and other days. Each believer must honestly decide what is right in these gray areas of Christian living.

6 The Jewish believer who feels he must continue to observe the feast days, does it out of a deep commitment to God. Similarly, the Gentile believer who feels that feast days are no longer valid does so out of a sincere conviction that the Lord no longer requires believers to keep them. Both are honest in their convictions, but neither must impose their views on the other. The same applies when it comes to eating; while believers may disagree as to what can be eaten, nevertheless, each believer is to eat to please the Lord. **7** For to be a true Christian means denying self and living a life well-pleasing to God in all matters (*1 Cor. 10:31-33*).

8 Genuine Christianity requires each believer to submit oneself to the formula of the Gospel, "Not I, but Christ" (*Gal. 2.20*). And

this, even if it means laying down our lives in the process. In other words, whether we live or die, a true Christian is completely committed to the will of God. **9** The cross of Christ demands such an attitude, since Christ redeemed us by His death and resurrection so that we may totally belong to Him in life and in death.

10 In view of this, Christians do not have the prerogative of judging each other. That right belongs to God alone and we shall all stand before His judgment seat, each to give an account of one-self. **11** This is how God, in the Old Testament, put it: "As the sovereign Lord I will judge every person according to the truth he or she is convicted of. And ultimately all will confess that I the Lord was just and fair in all my dealings" (Isa. 45:23). **12** With this in mind, let us all live conscious of the fact that one day each will have to give a personal account to God.

Living for One Another

13 Consequently, let us no longer keep judging one another's performance, but rather let us make sure our own behavior in no way becomes a hindrance to another believer's spiritual progress or, still worse, a means of causing the spiritual downfall of a fellow Christian. **14** I know and am convinced of Christ, that there is no merit in what we eat or drink, but to the one who is convicted that eating certain foods brings dishonor to the Lord, let him abstain.

15 Further, if eating particular foods offends your fellow believer, out of true Christian love, do not indulge in that food, especially if it affects his faith. **16** In other words, do not let questionable foods become a means of contention in the church. **17** After all, God's kingdom is not primarily concerned about foods but righteousness, peace and rejoicing in the Holy Spirit. **18** Keep these objectives uppermost in your minds and you will be living truly Christian lives, not only pleasing to God but also to your fellow believers.

19 Let us, therefore, direct our lives in such a way that it will bring peace and harmony in the church and spiritual growth among the believers. **20** For issues on ritual foods are really a personal thing and must not affect your relationship with one another or the cause of God. Therefore, let each Christian eat with a pure conscience before God. **21** What I am saying is, it is not good to eat meat or drink drinks that will cause, in any way, your fellow

believer to either stumble in the Christian walk, be offended, or weaken in faith.

22 Do you claim to have genuine faith, which works by love? (*Gal. 5:6*). Then show it by your Christ-like behavior. For happy is the person that is living a life free of guilt. **23** For when a Christian's conscience feels guilty before God in whatever is eaten or done, such a believer is obviously doing something inconsistent with the principle of faith, in which case it is right to feel guilty. For anything that is done out of harmony with faith is actually committing sin.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Building Each Other Spiritually

1 To those of you who are mature Christians, please be sympathetic and understanding with regards to the weaknesses of the immature believers who are still babes *in Christ*. Do not look down on them in self-righteousness. **2** Let every believer have genuine concern for the welfare of others and be helpful in building each other up spiritually, **3** just as Christ did not come to please Himself or to be ministered to but to seek and save lost humanity. He did what was prophesied of Him: "The condemnation and curse that belongs to sinful mankind was heaped upon me" (*Psa. 69:9*).

4 And, incidentally, these prophecies concerning our Lord's redemptive activity were penned for our comfort so that we may encourage one another to remain faithful in the midst of persecution, while we wait for our ultimate salvation. **5** May God, who has been long-suffering and patient towards each one of us give you that same attitude toward one another through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, **6** in order that in unison you may glorify God in words and actions—He whom we call Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. **7** Therefore, treat and accept each other just as God *in Christ* accepts us sinners as His sons and daughters.

Salvation Extended to the Gentiles

8 Now, it is true Christ came, as He announced, "but for the house of Israel." This is because God, in the Old Testament, promised salvation through the Jews or the descendants of

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This promise He fulfilled *in Christ*, who, according to His human nature, was a Jew. **9** Nevertheless, while salvation is through the Jews, it encompasses the Gentile world too; and for this they need to be grateful. And since salvation included all humanity it was prophesied: "The good news of salvation shall be preached among the Gentiles and His praises they will sing" (*Ps. 18:49*).

10 God's purpose of including the Gentiles in His salvation is so clearly taught in the Old Testament that I cannot see how we Jews missed it. Here are some examples: "Rejoice you Gentiles along with the Jews" (*Deut. 32:43*). **11** Or, "Praise God all you Gentiles and let all men glorify Him" (*Ps. 117:1*). **12** Even the great prophet Isaiah repeats the same truth: "There shall be a descendant of Jesse who will come to redeem all mankind and many Gentiles will believe in Him" (*Isa. 11:1,10*).

13 In view of this wonderful truth, may the God of our redemption fill you with joy unspeakable, peace that is beyond understanding, and full assurance of your salvation, so that under the influence of the Holy Spirit your hope never diminishes. **14** Not that I am doubting your faith, for I am convinced by the reports received that you Christians in Rome are full of love and good works, grounded in the truth and able to teach one another.

15 But in spite of this, I have been rather straightforward with you in reminding you of your Christian obligations, seeing that God has set me aside as an apostle, **16** a minister of Jesus Christ, especially assigned to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles and make them part of the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ and sanctification of the Holy Spirit. **17** And for this ministry I am most grateful to our Lord and Saviour, who is God's means of our redemption.

Salvation Extended to the Gentiles

18 What I have written to you is not my own opinion but what Christ Himself has revealed to me, commissioning me to win souls among the Gentiles, manifesting to them God's saving power in word and deeds. **19** That is, through miracles and supernatural acts demonstrating the power of God's Spirit so that from Jerusalem up to the remotest parts of the Middle East I have fully preached the good news of salvation *in Christ*.

20 And in doing this, I have especially endeavored to proclaim this gospel in unentered areas, lest I interfere with the witnessing and work of other Christian believers. **21** As a result of this ministry, the following prophecy has been fulfilled: "To those outside the covenant people of God I will be shown, and they who were not looking for the Messiah will rejoice in the truth when Christ is preached (*Isa. 52:15*). **22** And incidentally, it is this ministry that has hindered me from coming to you in Rome until now.

23 But now that I have finished the work commissioned to me and have proclaimed the gospel in all the unentered areas of the Middle East and in view of the fact that I have longed to come to Rome for many years, I certainly am looking forward to this trip. **24** My plans are to travel to Spain and include you in my itinerary. All being well, therefore, I expect to see you Roman Christians shortly and trust I will be blessed in your presence.

25 But first of all I have to return to Jerusalem with the special offerings the Greek Christians gave to help the suffering believers there. **26** These Greek Christians have heard about the hard time the believers in Jerusalem were having, and out of real concern have given special donations to aid the suffering Jewish believers. **27** You will be glad to know these Greek Christians were more than happy to give this help, seeing that salvation came of the Jews. They felt that since they, as Gentiles, were included in the redemption promised to the Jews, the least they could do in gratitude was to support the Jewish Christians in their material needs.

28 So when I have delivered the goods to the brethren in Jerusalem and made sure all is well, I will definitely plan to leave for Spain, **29** stopping at Rome on the way, where I will have the opportunity, I hope, to proclaim the gospel of Christ more fully to you.

30 In the meantime, please continue to uphold the love of God which you have received through the indwelling Spirit; and also, please pray for me, that God's will be done, **31** and that I may not be hindered from coming to you by the enemies of the gospel in Judea. Also, do not forget to pray for the believers in Jerusalem, that they may appreciate my work and the help I am bringing them **32** so that when I come to you I can do so with joy, knowing God has blessed my ministry and will continue to do so

in your presence. **33** May our wonderful God, who brings peace into our hearts, be with all of you continually. Amen.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Paul Greet's Fellow Workers in Rome

NOTE: Verses **1-16** of this concluding chapter are taken up in greetings to fellow believers who had once shared in Paul's ministry but were now residing in Rome. The common phrase applied in all these greetings is the expression *in Christ*, the central theme of Paul's theology and the fundamental truth that saves and unites all believers into one common bond and hope.

Paul Cautions Against False Teachers

17 In concluding this exposition of the glorious gospel of Christ, I beg you brethren to keep a careful lookout for those who oppose the truth as it is *in Christ* and would like to stir up division in the church. Avoid these false teachers at all cost. **18** For such people are not really serving Christ but their own selfish interest; and by their flattering words, deceive all those who are easily side-tracked. **19** However, I want you to know that I am delighted about the good reports I am hearing about your faithfulness to the truth; but at the same time, I feel obligated to warn you against these false teachers and counsel you to examine carefully everything you are being taught—sifting the truth from the error. **20** It will not be long now when God, through Christ, will put an end to Satan and his crafty ways. In the meantime, may the grace of our Lord continue to bless and keep you faithful unto the end. Amen.

Paul Concludes With Greetings

NOTE: Verses **21-24** are taken up in greetings from Paul's co-laborers, fellow countrymen and friends, and Tertius, Paul's secretary.

Benediction

25 And now, to Him who is able to make you strong and keep you from falling, through the power of the gospel of Christ, which was somewhat kept a mystery in the past, **26** but now has been fully revealed to you in the person of Jesus Christ and the teach-

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ings of God's Word, which is being proclaimed to all mankind according to God's commission, calling you to a faith-obedience of the truth. **27** To the only true God who is able to save us, may glory and praise forever go to Him and our Lord Jesus Christ, AMEN.

